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LOST IN A BLIZZARD
BY C. M. RUSSELL

RANCHE LIFE IN AMERICA

SIR,—You have asked me to write a few lines about the present series of pictures of 'Ranche Life in America.'

Perhaps it would not be out of place to say who is the painter of these. I had the pleasure of being in Mr. C. M. Russell's company some eight years ago in Montana. He had already painted some pictures of cow-boy life, and having had great experience himself was able to portray the life exactly. He could use the lasso himself, was ever ready to ride a broncho, and could cook and adapt himself to anything. People said that he had never had a lesson in painting, and I believe I am right in saying that one year he took a trip to New York with the intention of studying, and that on his return his style was no better, if as good, as when he went.

To anyone used to Colonial life the pictures are absolutely realistic. The Indian ponies are life-like and the surroundings such as one would see, and in each picture is the ever common buffalo skull, a relic of former days now, alas.

When the great trans-continental lines were built some fifteen years ago buffalo were plenty, and many men made a living by shooting them for their hides, which ever found a ready market. The result was easy to foresee. The noble animal is now almost extinct, except where strictly preserved, as in the Yellowstone Park, where to shoot a buffalo is a Penitentiary offence, but as long as some can get a market and risks even have to be taken, there are plenty of people ready to take those risks. I am informed that Buffalo heads and scalps fetch readily in New York 500

RANCHE LIFE IN AMERICA



INDIAN HORSE THIEVES
BY C. M. RUSSELL

dollars, and I may add that some years ago, having a small place adjacent to the Yellowstone Park, for reasons unnecessary to relate, I was very anxious to return to England. Having laid out some considerable capital on my homestead, I was of course glad to get at any rate some of it back. One morning a hunter came in and said, 'How much for your place?' I stated the price, and he answered me, 'How long will you give me to get the money?' That point being agreed on, I noticed his horses, six or seven of them, pass my place with packs on their backs as if for a tour. A week or so after I saw them return with larger packs, and he came to me that evening and said, 'All right, I shall have the money in a few days to pay you.' I had my suspicions, but of course made no remark, and I afterwards found out that several large cases had been despatched to a celebrated taxidermist in the Eastern States. Be this true or no, I may add that he paid me shortly after for the place, and I am sure that were I to go there again I should now find him a prosperous young man, because as they would say there, 'He had the rustle.' But I am digressing from my story, and must now try to explain some of the pictures.

Going into Camp requires no explanation, the figures are so realistic and the whole scene is

taken in at a glance. *Shooting a Spy* also is most beautifully done. It is no doubt taken from a trip to the bad lands of Dakota, where the land is very broken up and sage brush flourishes. *Indian Boy* is also a remarkable study and absolutely true to life—the phlegmatic expression on the boy's face as he sucks the tip of his arrow and feels very much satisfied with himself at having killed his first rabbit, which is very much akin to our hare. *A Signal of Peace* shows some cowboys meeting with some Indians. No doubt there has been trouble about some cattle, and the Indians holding up their hands is a sign of peace; probably they will have a pow-wow and make an explanation of the matter. *Indian Horse Thieves* shows the cowboys' camp in the valley, where they are preparing to stay the night. The Indians on the top of the rock are watching their chance, no doubt, to make a raid and steal some horses when the camp is quiet. Horse-stealing in the West is one of the worst offences one can be guilty of. Perhaps they will forgive you for killing a man but never for stealing a horse, and a lasso and the branch of the nearest tree is generally the finale if the culprit is caught. *Lost in a Blizzard* shows some cowboys meeting a troupe of Indians and trying to find out where they are. Blizzards come on with great

C. M. RUSSELL

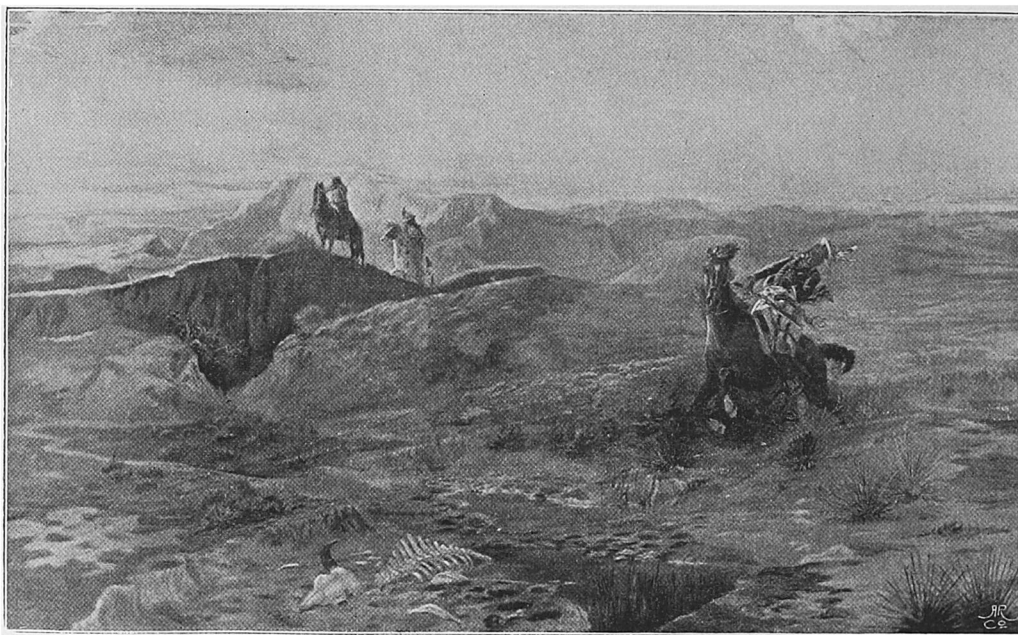
severity, and it is a fact sometimes you cannot see a yard. Some people have been lost trying to find their way from the stable to the house. It is a predicament not to be desired. Frequently the blizzard is followed by the 'Chinook,' the soft wind from the Pacific, that thaws away the snow in a few hours, and enables the starving cattle to get something to eat.

The life is all very well for a certain time, but there is, I am afraid, not much profit to be made and the risks are very great. It is impossible to imagine the number of young Englishmen with good public-school education who go out there with from £1,000 to £10,000; in a few years they return sadder but wiser men, having, as one said to me, worked like a nigger and got nothing for it but 'rupture and rheumatism.' To a delicate fellow that requires an open-air life I can understand it being very enjoyable to go and stop at a ranche and not do the rough work, because he can see a bit of life—something new every day. The cowboys are a good, rough-and-ready lot, good-natured when not upset, and I never had the slightest difficulty in hitting it off with them. 'Light come, light go,' I think, is generally their motto; they work perhaps for three months at wages averaging £6 to £8 per month,

and then go to the nearest town where there is a saloon and have a 'jamboree'—that is gambling and getting drunk, generally handing over their money to the bar tender and saying, 'Here, Boss, when this lot is drunk up tell me, and when it comes to an end off to the ranche again to earn some more for the saloon.'

Russell, the painter of these pictures, was a most quiet, nice man, whose only pleasure was in camp, where, riding bucking bronchos, roping cattle and other things connected with camp life were his chief delights. There is not the slightest doubt that if he had been taken in hand at an early age he would have made a celebrated name for himself, for his style is unique, and often every figure in his pictures is the portrait of some fellow-cowboy. To the reader, I would say do not let the glamour of the life run away with you. The writer of this spent eight years in and around Montana, free and easy ones they were, no doubt, but eight years uselessly spent which might have been more profitably employed. It is the cry of the English parent, that if the younger son has been perhaps a little wild, send him out West and let him make his fortune. Poor chap! Very little awaits him out there, and in after years he can but have regrets like

'A FULL HAND.'



SHOOTING A SPY
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A SIGNAL OF PEACE
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THE ARTIST



INDIAN BOY
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